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Memorial sketch

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THOMAS BRIDGES, Esq., F.L.S., F.Z.S.

AND MEMBER OF THE CALA. ACAD. NAT. SCI.

A Paper read before the California Academy of Natural Sciences, Jan. 8th, 1866,

BY W. H. DALL, OF THE SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION, ACTING DIRECTOR SCI. CORPS, W. U. T. EX.

Mr. Bridges was born at Lilly in Hertfordshire, England, on the twenty-second of May, 1807.

At an early age he became interested in Natural History, and when about nineteen or twenty—having previously studied for some three years under Sir William Hooker, at Kew Gardens—he sailed for Valparaiso. He remained there, or passed the time in some of the adjoining provinces, from 1827 to 1844, when he returned to England on a short visit. On again reaching South America, he undertook the explorations in Bolivia, so well known to naturalists through their magnificent results. During the course of this journey, in June, 1845, he discovered and obtained seeds of the great South American Water Lily, the *Victoria Regia*, Lindley. Although the plant had previously been detected, to Mr. Bridges belonged the honor of first introducing it into the old world, by transporting seeds which subsequently germinated at Kew.

In 1846, he returned to England, where for many months he was prostrated by severe illness contracted in his arduous explorations.

In 1847, he was married to Miss Mary Benson, of Bristol, England, a niece of the eminent collector, the late Hugh Cuming. Soon after he proceeded again to Valparaiso.

In 1851, he visited and explored the island of Juan Fernandez.

In the report of Lieut. Herndon, U. S. N., on his explorations of the Amazon, he acknowledges his obligations to Mr. Bridges, for invaluable information furnished, in regard to the head-waters of that river.

In 1855, he proceeded to Panama, remaining there some six months; and from thence to England, subsequently to France, and finally to California, where he arrived in November, 1856.

About 1857, he went to British Columbia, and remained nearly two years, collecting and exploring. In the winter of 1858, his family, hitherto in Europe,

rejoined him. Since then San Francisco has been his home, though travelling in many parts of California.

In April, 1865, he undertook his ill-starred journey to Nicaragua. His researches here were limited principally to the lake country, where he passed some five months exploring the dense and tangled jungles of the vicinity; ascending the volcanoes of Mombacho and Ometepec, and visiting Leon and Granada. In June, he met at San Juan del Sur, our well-known botanist, Dr. Torrey, on his way to San Francisco. These two kindred spirits passed several pleasant days together.

He left Nicaragua on the steamship Moses Taylor, Capt Blethen, on the third of September, 1865, apparently in perfect health. On the fifth, the effects of the insidious malaria of the country were evident. On the ninth, he died; being fifty-eight years old. On the seventeenth, the body arrived in San Francisco, and was afterwards interred at Lone Mountain Cemetery. He leaves a widow, two daughters, and three sons.

Mr. Bridges was of a singularly retiring and modest disposition, and very few publications of his own remain to attest his devotion to Natural Science. But works in every branch of study, particularly of Professor Lindley, and Sir William Hooker, in the department of Botany, bear abundant evidence of his untiring industry and unusual success.

That he died a martyr to his love for Natural History, there is no room for doubt; and his most appropriate memorials are the magnificent evergreens now adorning, through his agency, the groves and avenues of the old world.

With all impartial naturalists, Mr. Bridges and such as he, "who bear the burden and heat of the day," are entitled to as high honors, if not precisely of the same character, as those due to the students who in their comfortable libraries work up the results of the collector.

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